

*Penelope Shuttle*  
The Seventh Year

The seventh year  
is a narrow river rushing

from bad to worse,  
how can it be so hard

to bear, surely by now  
loss should be light

as a Dior scarf, a bee's wing,  
a sigh?

Instead what a weighty year,  
hefty as a goodbye

made of wrought iron,  
a broom fashioned out of lead –

what sort of room  
does such a broom sweep,  
a dungeon, an oubliette?

The seventh year  
has nothing to do with forgetting,

has memories the world's  
strongest man would be hard-pressed

to shift, hauling a couple of  
locomotives across a goods yard

child's-play compared  
to tugging these memories  
in its wake...

The seventh year bangs  
its fist on the cell door,

drums itself out of the army,  
lies about its past, forgets its future,

starts the year from scratch  
(seven year itch?), can't

believe the evidence of its eyes,  
pulls out all the stops,

rescues itself single-handed  
from drowning,

asks for many other crimes  
to be taken into consideration,

is an eye shedding  
the same tear over and over again

as the full-leaf trees  
buck their great green manes  
in the strong westerly

and the field  
is a sudden elegy of sunlight.